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ABSTRACT

The major thrust of organized camping has focused on the development of recreational skills and the comradeship of group living. While the value of these activities is not denied, the true potential of camping should be realized in an attempt to change and improve the value system in our society. Future trends in camping will be (1) increased specialization in camp activities by individual camps to cater to particular segments of the child population, (2) review of camping activities as to their purpose and effect, (3) increased programs of extensive travel, and (4) intensive study of resident campsites and the surrounding community with regard to ecology and community makeup. Camp counselors will be taking part in more extensive training programs, but the need for counselors with a missionary zeal will remain of prime importance. For camping to reach its fullest potential, the activities and training must be dedicated to development of an appreciation of, and responsibility for, our natural resources and life. This may be termed a "land ethic," and its development should be the major focus of present and future camping activities. (DK)

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# ORGANIZED CAMPING--WHAT IS ITS FUTURE?

Camping Trends Conference
Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., Region I
White House Inn
Chicopee, Massachusetts
November 13, 1968

Address Delivered by: Dr. John J. Kirk
Director
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Branchville, New Jersey

My dear Colleagues in Camping:

I want to express my appreciation to the Planning Committee for inviting me to attend this conference of Girl Scout professionals and for permitting me to share my thoughts and ideas on the future that organized camping will play in the development and achievement of a better world.

Back in 1916 the distinguished scholar and president of Harvard University, Dr. Charles W. Elliott, made the statement that "organized camping is the most significant contribution to education that America has given to the world." You have perhaps heard this statement quoted many times. It has been used down through the years, sometimes as a defense, and many times as a support for the organized camping movement. However, I would like to suggest to you this afternoon that the true potential of organized camping that an educational visionary like Charles Elliott was able to see has never really been achieved. I hasten to add that I do not believe that the organized camping movement has not contributed much to enrich the lives of millions of young Americans down through the years. However, the major thrust of the camping movement has focused on the development of recreational skills and the comradeship of group living. Now I would be the last to deny the value and satisfaction of these worthwhile goals. However, if we settle for these as the major contributions

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of organized camping then we are selling the field far short of its potential goal. I would like to add another thought to Dr. Elliott's famous statement and submit that: "The organized summer camp is the most effective instrument in American society for implementing social change."

It is this dimension that most camp directors have overlooked down through the years. Many people in our country today view organized camping as little more than toasting marshmallows and singing songs around the campfire. These are certainly fun activities, and I hope they will always be included in a camp program. But we as professionals in organized camping cannot settle for such mundane activities when the true potential of camping could change and improve the value system in our society.

Now I would like to share with you some of the thoughts and ideas that I feel camping during the next half-century must strive to achieve, and I would suggest that you begin to initiate some of these practices in the summer of 1969. Of course, I must remind you that I have no crystal ball, nor am I very successful at reading tea leaves in predicting the future of camping. What I will do this afternoon is merely share with you one person's point of view on how I believe the vehicle of organized camping can and will be used in the years ahead to better serve the youth of this great land.

The first major change I see taking place in the not too distant future is a new focus in programming among the private or independent camps. In order to survive in a more competitive age, it will become increasingly important that private camps begin to specialize in one or two camp activities in order to cater to that particular segment of the child population.

The private camp offering a generalized recreational program will soon be vanishing from the scene because during the past two decades the organizational camps have improved the quality of programming, of content, and of supervision and are now worthy competitors of private camping. Since the organizational camp has been and will continue to be subsidized either through Government support or through general fund drives, the tuition of such camps will be considerably less than what a private operator is forced to charge in order to meet his expenses. So then in the next ten to fifteen years there will be more specialized private camps for riding, swimming, music, and other such recreational activities. I would support this change because I feel there will always be a place for such specialized camps and for private camping in this country. Another possible change in private camping is that in the years ahead, I believe you will see more of them serving a coeducational clientele rather than just a boys' or girls' camp. This will provide opportunities for more flexibility in programming and will also provide a broader economic market for the services they offer.

Another change that I feel is much needed and long overdue in all camps is an analysis as to the purpose for including certain activities in the program. Everywhere you go across the country, from Maine to California and from the Great Lakes area to Florida, you hear that camping no longer appeals to the teenager. Some directors shake their head in despair and will utter in disgust, "I just don't know what's wrong with the young people today. Why thirty years ago teenagers just loved these activities," and that's the key to the problem. The activities are virtually the same as they were thirty years ago with the same focus and purpose.

Let us look at some of the campcraft activities for example. We teach our campers fire by friction or fire with flint and steel, and we try to convince them that this is the way it should be done in a wilderness setting. They know this isn't so and that now there are more efficient means of starting a fire and since time is always at a premium in a wilderness setting, why waste time with fire by friction or fire with flint and steel? And when we try to sell these methods as being the ideal methods for wilderness camping, the young people shake their heads, shrug their shoulders, and quickly loose interest. Why don't these camp directors and camp leaders recognize that there are more efficient and better ways for starting fires today and teach our young people how to use the very latest means and the most modern techniques of lighting a fire in a primitive setting? Then let us also teach our campers the fire by friction method and flint and steel method and point out to them that these methods are part of the American heritage and these were the ways of our forefathers. Let them see how man in his ingenuity and imagination has improved down through the years. If this approach is utilized, then our young people will appreciate the chance to travel back through the pages of history and relive some of the experiences since this is truly a part of their heritage. If we pursue this line of reasoning, then many of the campcraft activities can become, as it were, a living museum, and this is the approach that should be used. Why do we lash tables and chairs when hammers and nails are more efficient? We use lashing once again to illustrate how our frontiersmen were forced to live, and we should point out the inconvenience and the time-consuming aspects of these antiquated techniques. This will help our young people to respect and admire our forefathers--those courageous

men and women who conquered the wilderness and worked and survived without the advantages of modern technology. So let us all review in great depth the campcraft skills we teach and continue to teach the old methods because they represent a very significant part of our past and are in reality a segment of the great American heritage. But let us also recognize our responsibilities to provide our young people with the most advanced techniques of living and surviving in a wilderness setting. We should familiarize them with the advantages and the methods of utilizing dehydrated foods, the very latest in trail gear--the portable stove--and all the rest that is a part of wilderness camping in the year 1968 and will become even more accepted as the only way to do it by the year 2000. This same principle applies to our arts and crafts programs. Instead of falling back on the very mundane craft activity utilizing kits and precut pieces of leather and gaudy little beads that can be purchased in any five-and-dime, let us emphasize the nature crafts that were a part of the daily life experience of pioneer women. Let us spend some time in the library and engage in authentic Indian crafts, making our own native dyes and working leather and other materials the way the first Americans did long before the white man arrived on the continent. Using this approach, we can put a new excitement into our crafts program, and it will take on a new meaning because the organized summer camp will be the only place where skills like these are preserved and placed in their proper perspective. Then and only then will our campcraft programs and our arts and crafts programs be appealing to the young people of the future.

Another trend I see taking shape, and which may be the only answer in attracting teenagers in the future is an extensive program of travel.

When I say this, I am not referring to a one- or two-day canoe trip down a river which has been travelled many times before by the same group of campers. Rather, travel to other lands with an opportunity to experience life in another culture. We must remember that the thrill and the excitement of other cultures is no further away from our young people today than the television set in their living room or study. Of course, this is only a vicarious experience and through an exchange program with camps in other lands, it would be possible to provide direct learning experiences. I realize that some of this is already being done and the Girl Scouts have a built-in potential for achieving such experiences on a greater scale than most other youth-serving organizations. I am referring to cooperative exchange programs with the Girl Guides of other lands. Look at some of the memorable roundups that your organization has sponsored in the past. In talking with young girls who have participated is such experiences, the one thing that stands out in their minds is the opportunity to exchange ideas with girls from other countries. Why not make this part of the regular camp program where your teenage girls each summer would have an opportunity to visit a different country. With travel costs coming down and the world getting smaller everyday, this is certainly not beyond realization within the next few years. I would add a caution that unless something like this is done, you will lose in increasing numbers your teenage members, and this would be a tragedy because the teenage years are the formative years when dedicated leaders like yourselves have so much to contribute to forming values and setting examples for the young women of our country.

Another approach that I believe will be taking shape in the not too distant future is that you will be providing your campers with more opportunities to learn about the resident campsite and the surrounding community. So many times we take campers a hundred, two hundred, and sometimes even three hundred miles from home and place them in the campsite, and during that period they are in camp the only time they go to the local town or village is perhaps that one afternoon a week to visit the candy store. In some camps they are not even permitted this much of a contact with the outside world. Why not try to excite the imagination of your campers by challenging them to learn more about the campsite and the land on which they are living? What was the land used for before it was a camp? How did the local village come to be? Why did people settle here in the first place? What is the major industry? What do other young people who live in the village do for excitement during the year? How are their lives different from the lives we live back in our home town? These are all the questions that your campers may ask, and they should be given the opportunity to find the answers. Such projects would perhaps be termed by some of my colleagues in university work as rural sociology. It would enable your young people to learn more about rural America, which in truth is the backbone of our Republic. I can recall very vividly an evaluation session that took place at the conclusion of one of our school camp experiences for ninth graders. These young people coming from the New York City area had been given the opportunity of visiting one of the small villages of northern New Jersey and talking with the grocer and the barber and the gas station attendant and the local policemen in order to learn more about their lives and why they decided to live in such a remote area. One of

these ninth grade youngsters made a statement which I feel has a great deal of significance. He said, "You know, I never realized before how many little people there are in America, and America could not have survived without them." What a wonderful lesson and what a wonderful concept to carry away as a result of a camping experience. So in the future I predict that our campers will be getting out of the camp much more than they do at the present time, and when they leave camp, it will not be only for canoe trips and backpacking on remote trails, but rather to learn more about what kinds of people contribute to the formation of the American dream.

Now we have talked a great deal about campers and some of the changes in programming that will appeal to the young people of the future, but what of the counselors? How will we continue to draw dedicated and talented young people to work in our camps? As we look at the economic picture, we can quickly realize that a young woman of college age may be able to earn more money babysitting during the summer months than she could earn in eight or nine weeks by working as a counselor at an organized camp. What is the answer then? We certainly can't raise salaries, because if we do, it will force up tuition to a point where we will not be able to attract those young people whom we should be serving. Is there an answer, or is the resident camp doomed in the years ahead? I submit that there is an answer that can solve the problems and draw to our camps the highest type of young people imaginable. I for one am opposed to raising salaries so that a major incentive for working at a camp is the financial remuneration. A college student who comes motivated only by the salary check he or she will pick up at the end of the summer is not the kind of an individual

I want in my camp. I want the individual who brings to camp a missionary zeal to share his talents and gifts that have been given to him by God with the inquiring and searching young minds of our wonderful campers.

You can get this kind of counselor and the way you can do it is to add an educational dimension to your camp program. I predict that in the years ahead it will become extremely important for organized camps to affiliate as partners with institutions of higher learning throughout the country. It may be that you as a camp director would hire as your program director a member of a university faculty who would provide learning experiences for your counselors that would carry academic credit. The organized camp is an ideal laboratory for a young person majoring in the social sciences, the natural sciences, education, or recreation.

If you will pardon a personal example, I would like to share with you the educational innovation which we have been pursuing at our camp for the past four years. All the counselors in the camp I am privileged to direct receive either graduate or undergraduate college credit for their experiences in addition to their regular camp counselor's salary. This, of course, requires extra work and begins with a six-day counselor-in-training program, which runs from nine o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night. Our camp is a natural science camp, and much of the work falls in this area. However, our counselors also receive material on child and adolescent psychology, camping philosophy, general administrative techniques, and first aid. In addition to the pre-camp training, every Saturday evening our counselors attend a two-hour lecture and are also required to read one chapter of a textbook a week and submit a one-page critical analysis of that reading. I am the instructor of the

course, and the first year our counselors are with us, they receive three semester hours of college credit. The second year they are with us, they are enrolled in a conservation course which is designed as an independent study project where they are required to complete a list of selected readings and also develop units that may be used with children in the field to develop concepts in the area of conservation. There is nothing so unique about our camp that this approach and technique could not be used and implemented in any other camp in the United States. It just happens that I, as the director of the camp, also teach the courses. In other camps where the director may not have a college or university affiliation, this can be arranged, as I said earlier, by hiring a program director with such credentials. The tuition or cost of the course could be deducted from the regular camp salary that the counselor would receive, and payment could be made to the university. One thing you will find if you pursue this approach is that the young people you get applying for counselor positions bring a zeal and a degree of dedication that you will seldom find in using any other incentive for staff recruitment.

Now I would like to share with you the trend or change that I envision taking place in organized camping that will help the camping movement to realize its true potential. Although we as camping leaders have been taking children to wilderness settings for several decades now, as a group we have done little to develop in the young people we have been privileged to serve an awareness of their interdependence on one another and on all other forms of life as they are expressed on this planet. Although we speak about life in the out-of-doors and the joy of living in an outdoor setting, we have done so little to educate our youngsters in the need to

use wisely the resources that have been given to us from above. Many times in my travels throughout the country I have heard professionals in the field of conservation make the statement that the organized camp frequently illustrates the poorest examples of land use that can be found anywhere. This hurts a great deal, since first and foremost I consider myself a camping professional. However, I feel that all of the criticism that has been leveled in the past will soon disappear, for camping leaders everywhere are beginning to realize their obligation to develop in their children a realization and an awareness that they are an integral part of the total life cycle. At our camp we refer to this as the reverence-for-life concept, and we also attempt to develop in our youngsters a land ethic that will help them to realize they are merely temporary stewards of the land. Everyone who calls himself a camping professional, from the executive director right on down through the youngest junior counselor, has a responsibility to try to develop in campers this sense of responsibility and sense of awareness. About two weeks ago I attended a workshop at the national headquarters of the American Camping Association. This workshop was sponsored by the Lilly Cup Foundation and the Conservation Foundation through the efforts of the Gifford Pinchot Institute for Conservation Studies. Twenty-three representatives from Government and private agencies all concerned with conservation met to discuss how the organized camp could further and advance the concepts of conservation in the years ahead. The preamble to the recommendations developed at this workshop reads as follows: "We believe that a major educational goal of organized camping is the recognition by man of his interdependence with his environment and with life everywhere and his responsibility to

maintain that environment in a manner fit for life and fit for living." During the course of the discussions it was pointed out that the organized summer camp is perhaps better equipped to accomplish this goal than any other youth-serving agency in our society. This new realization changes the major scope and purpose that many of us have held in the past. No longer are we able to consider our major responsibility as that of providing a general recreational experience in an outdoor setting. We may continue to do this, and I certainly hope that we will, but in addition, we must try to develop in our children an appreciation for life and to help them discover that all life is sacred and that we are an integral part of this web of living things. What does the reverence-for-life concept do for children? As we counselors and leaders in the organized camp help children to discover the beauty and majesty of life, they suddenly begin to realize that they represent the ultimate of living things on this planet. This realization can do much to enhance the child's self-concept. What is even more important is that when the child looks at another child, he looks beyond the color of his skin or the language he speaks or the church he attends, for before him he sees another human being which is the ultimate of creation as it is expressed in this world, and this is what becomes important, and all of the other things are merely incidentals.

This appreciation of life also helps our young people to develop a compassion for those in our big cities and elsewhere across this great country who are forced to live under conditions that tend to degrade the dignity of man. Youngsters with attitudes developed along these lines cannot help but attempt to undertake projects and demonstrate behavior back in their communities that will show their concern and yes, their love, for their fellow man.

The development of a land ethic which I referred to earlier is also extremely important, since it tends to help our youngsters realize that man never really owns land but is only a temporary steward, and as such there is a responsibility to use the gifts that have been given to us wisely in order that those who follow may also have the joy and satisfaction of living as we have know it. When we consider the major problems of air pollution and water pollution and other examples of mismanagement of resources, when we envision the problems of overcrowding and overpopulation in our cities, we cannot help but lament that the reverence-for-life concept and the land ethic have not been an integral part of our educational systems in the past. However, I hasten to add that it is not too late, and we as camping leaders must begin to assume the responsibility that is ours. As I have said earlier, the organized camp is the most effective instrument in American society for implementing these changes. Whether or not the true potential of the camping movement is ever realized depends upon you. Will you meet the challenge? Will you recognize your responsibility as teachers--teachers not of any one subject area but rather teachers in the art of living--so that all of our campers will better understand the thrill and adventure of life. This whole concept is perhaps best expressed in the lines of a poem written by a student of mine who is now pursuing graduate studies at the University of Indiana. She has been a member of my summer camp staff for five years now. The title of the poem is simply "Riches," and I would like to share it with you.

## Riches

By the rich man's measure, I have no wealth;
By the famous, I'm still unknown.
I can't claim the wisdom of age
For as yet, I'm not full grown.

But I can follow a compass
To any place you name,
And I can turn a pile of sticks
Into a flickering, yellow flame
I can tell by the smell on the breeze
If a summer storm is near.
I can tell you the tales of the stars
On a night when the sky is clear.
I can feel the presence of God
From setting sun to setting sun
And oft when I am wandering
My spirit, in His, is one.

So by my measure, I've untold wealth,
And I'd rather remain unknown.
To be free to search and know
The woods I'm wont to roam.

-Suzanne Blatchford-
University of Indiana